

# Task Force Smith

## The Lesson Never Learned

A Monograph  
By  
Major John Garrett  
Infantry



School of Advanced Military Studies  
United States Army Command and General Staff College  
Fort Leavenworth, Kansas

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## ABSTRACT

TASK FORCE SMITH, THE LESSON NEVER LEARNED, by Major John Garrett, USA, 56 pages

This monograph explores the often-used phrase "No more Task Force Smiths." This catchphrase is used to express a desire to avoid the perceived mistakes that lead to the defeat of Task Force Smith during the Korean War, July 1950. It deployed and was decimated by the North Korean advance. The defeat has generally been blamed on poor training, poor leadership and poor equipment. The real cause for the failure, however, has been ignored.

Task Force Smith was deployed to the Korean Theater without any concept of how and why it was to be employed. During the initial phase of the Korean War, the United States forces were repeatedly thrown into battle against the North Koreans without any real reflection, but under the illusion that it was better to do something than nothing. It was the operational leadership, above Task Force Smith, that was the part of the Army that was the most ill prepared. The leadership of the Army had failed to learn the art of war, or even the doctrine of the period.

This monograph explores what happened to Task Force Smith and why. The commonly held misconceptions used by authors to explain the failure are examined and tested by the facts. Then the primary positions held up as responsible for the failure are scrutinized, for instance, training, leadership and un-preparedness. Finally, this paper then endeavors to examine the operational doctrine of the time and the failure of the leadership to understand and use it. The lesson never learned is that the understanding of military science and the operational art, not technology, plays the greatest role in victory or defeat.

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## INTRODUCTION

### Task Force Smith, the Lesson Never Learned

#### 1. Introduction

In 1989, General Gordon Sullivan, then the Army Chief of Staff, stated that the then ongoing drawdown of forces after the Cold War would not lead to another Task Force Smith.<sup>1</sup> His reference was to the commonly held opinion that Task Force Smith, the first American ground unit engaged in the Korean War, was defeated because it was unprepared for war; and this un-preparedness was due in part to the rapid draw-down of forces after the Second World War that led to a hollow force.

General Sullivan was responding to a long history of reports on the un-preparedness of Task Force Smith and inadvertently was also perpetuating this version of the events. This monograph argues that Task Force Smith was not a failure because of its own admitted shortcomings, but rather it was a victim of a headquarters that knowingly assigned it an impossible mission. Task Force Smith failed because its mission was not achievable by any single infantry battalion. The problem rested with the senior leaders of the 24th Infantry Division, Eighth U.S. Army and higher headquarters who failed to provide the proper operational leadership, not with the soldiers serving in Japan or with the congress that funded it.

The United States Army in 1950 did have problems; it was not the army that had won the Second World War. The Army of 1950 was short of personnel and relied heavily on equipment made or designed for the Second World War. Yet while this equipment was not in great shape it was available, and by and large serviceable, though often worn and lacking in spare parts. In Japan the United States Army's problems of

manpower and equipment was amplified by several other factors. The units had few large training areas and had limited training budgets. Medium tanks had played a small role in the Pacific War and in view of the fact that Japan had a limited number of bridges capable of withstanding their weight, they were withdrawn, consequently only the light M-24 Chaffee tanks were stationed in Japan. Training was certainly challenging because of the manpower shortages and other administrative problems. Yet, the fact remains that the officer corps and non-commissioned officer corps were generally well manned with experienced men, many of whom were combat veterans who knew how to train.<sup>2</sup> Given this state of affairs did the Army do its best within these constraints? This monograph will establish that it did not.

This monograph begins by an examination of what happened to Task Force Smith and the rest of the 24<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division in June 1950. This inquiry will not obscure the fact that these units, A/52 Field Artillery Battalion, the 1/21<sup>st</sup> Infantry Regiment, and its headquarters the 24<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division had many shortcomings. It will however demonstrate that it was not these unit deficiencies that were the immediate cause of the failure. The commonly given reasons for failure will be examined, such as the unpreparedness of the unit for war due to occupation duties, manpower and equipment shortages, and the congressional failure to fund the Army adequately. Secondly, the success or failure of leadership at the unit and division level to properly prepare the unit to be fit and ready for war will be determined.

## **2. Task Force Smith what happened?**

The North Koreans started the Korean War with a powerful attack south across the demilitarized zone first established by the Americans and Soviets in 1945. The South

Korean Army had been trained as an army but equipped like a constabulary force by the American advisors stationed in South Korea.<sup>3</sup> The training of this force by 1949 was under the authority of the State Department not the Army. Up to three weeks before the invasion, General Roberts stated, "The South Korean forces are better equipped than the North Korean army is".<sup>4</sup> When the war began, the South Korean forces fought bravely and many paid with their lives to compensate for inadequate equipment and training. The bold North Korea drive south was based upon a well thought operational design, good equipment and good training.<sup>5</sup> The quality of their planning can be seen in a translation of the operation order of the 4th NK Division that fought against Task Force Smith.

(Appendix A)

When the news of the attack reached the American Forces in Japan, it was initially not considered a crisis. Most thought it a small confrontation and it would soon be over. When one major South Korean City after another fell to the communists, President Truman felt, he needed to intervene to halt this aggression. General MacArthur arrived in South Korea, assessed the situation, and determined that both air and land forces would be required to stop this invasion. It was under these conditions that hasty orders were issued to the 24<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division that would send the first Americans into combat since 1945.

The idea of Task Force Smith started with General MacArthur's message C56942 to the JCS. It was received in Washington at midnight 29-30 June 1950. It stated

"If authorized, it is my intention immediately to move a U.S. regimental combat team to the reinforcement of the vital area discussed (Han river line and the Seoul-Suwon corridor) and to provide for a possible build up to a two division strength from the troops in Japan for an early counter-offensive."<sup>6</sup>

The JCS reply, DA-10 Ref FEC-1 stated, " Your recommendation to move one

Regimental Combat Team (RCT) to combat area is approved.”<sup>7</sup> General MacArthur, by this time, had a three-phased plan for the defense of Korea that consisted of (1) rapid delaying actions (2) establishment of a holding line above Pusan (3) and an amphibious invasion behind enemy lines.<sup>8</sup> This plan was in accordance with Operations Plan SL-17 (Defense of the Korean Peninsula). This formal Operations Plan was likely the germination of MacArthur’s plan that he later claimed credit for creating.<sup>9</sup> SL-17 was a viable operational concept. MacArthur, however, executed it, without an understanding of the relationship of the mission to aim.

This momentous and daring decision to deploy troops rapidly to Korea revealed the initial operational flaw that cost so many lives later. When this concept was developed, 30 June 1950, the NK army was already crossing the Han River and had attacked south into the Seoul-Suwon corridor.<sup>10</sup> There was no established RCT ready in Japan to deploy and one would have to be improvised.<sup>11</sup> A full RCT is a very powerful force that may possibly have been able to delay the North Koreans, but there was insufficient airlift to move the heavy equipment and the sheer number of troops of a RCT. Sealift could have done it, but that would not have met MacArthur’s uncompromising timeline.<sup>12</sup> The JCS questioned the wisdom of this deployment during a Teletype conference. They asked if he could deploy the entire RCT of heavy equipment by air and if he could not, might the plan fail?<sup>13</sup> Gen MacArthur arrogantly refused to reply to this, as was his habit when confronted by tough questions.<sup>14</sup> In frustration, the JCS simply got the President’s approval, without receiving any reply from MacArthur. If MacArthur deserved credit for the subsequent Inchon landings, he also deserves recognition for the employment of Task Force Smith and the initial predicament the 24th Infantry Division

was thrust into.<sup>15</sup>

On 30 June 1950, MG Dean received the order from Gen Walker, the Eighth Army commander, to fly his division headquarters and one Infantry Regiment to Pusan. The remaining elements of the division would go by sea.<sup>16</sup> The limited quantities of C-54 cargo aircraft made this plan immediately infeasible. It would take weeks for the few planes available to move the Division headquarters and a Regimental Combat Team. Given the fact that General MacArthur's headquarters had ordered an airlift, the force was tailored to fit the aircraft.<sup>17</sup>

The great irony is that the 34th Regiment deployed by sea and the airlifted TF Smith both arrived in Pusan on 1 July, except that the 34th Regiment was intact.<sup>18</sup> Alpha Battery, 52nd Field Artillery had also deployed by sea and was able to link up with and fight with Task Force Smith. The Task Force Smith airlift met MacArthur's requirement to fly forces, not any mission requirement.<sup>19</sup>

From the beginning, Task Force Smith was never configured for a mission, but for the airlift available. The mission was never questioned by anyone or any headquarters, so a near impossible RCT mission was given to two rifle companies to accomplish.

Task Force Smith was given a Regimental Combat Teams mission, with not even ten percent of its assets; it was given a mission it could not achieve.<sup>20</sup>

So one artillery battery of 105mm howitzers was sent in lieu of an artillery Battalion of 155mm cannons, two 4.2" mortars instead of a company. Two rifle companies instead of sixteen and zero tanks instead of fourteen were sent, no forward air controllers to prevent friendly strafing, no engineers to emplace obstacles or mines. No



medical company to treat and evacuate casualties was present, no air defense company to protect the unit's movements, no military police to control the route and no signal platoon to communicate, and no reconnaissance platoon.<sup>21</sup> This brave tiny force was placed in front of the absolute strongest part of the North Korean Army, along the main approach route of five NK Infantry Divisions and one NK Armored Division. Not out of ignorance of the situation, but out of thoughtless pride of the MacArthur and the failure of any other commander to correct or even see the blunder.<sup>22</sup> No commander in the chain of command questioned the mission, even when it became clear that only two companies, not a Regimental Combat Team was being sent to accomplish the mission.<sup>23</sup> The ability to execute quickly and follow orders are clearly admirable traits and are characteristic of good military organizations.<sup>24</sup> Nonetheless, following orders that are clearly dissociated from the commanders intent is not a trait that reflects a well balanced military chain of command.

### **Task Force Smith**

What follows is a synopsis of the major phases of this operation and a sad chapter in American military planning:

#### **a. Preparation**

Task Force Smith was formed from the 21<sup>st</sup> Infantry Regiment of the 24th Infantry Division. The Task Force consisted of the B and C Infantry Companies and half of the Headquarters Company. It was reinforced with two 75mm recoilless guns of M Company and two 4.2" mortars from the Mortar Company and an artillery battery of 105mm guns from the 52nd Artillery Battalion. The number of transport aircraft immediately available in Japan determined the size.

b. Mission in Japan

LTC Brad Smith the Task Force commander, while in Japan preparing to depart, met with General Dean the commander of the 24th Infantry Division. General Dean told LTC Smith to "head for Taejon and stop the North Koreans as far north of Pusan as possible."<sup>25</sup> He also told LTC Smith to find Brigadier General Church in Taejon to get further information, orders and intelligence. BG Church was the commander of General MacArthur's Advance Command and Liaison Group, recently deployed to Korea.

General Dean in the mean time had been ordered to deploy the entire 24<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division to South Korea. Thus, while Task Force Smith flew into Pusan the rest of the 24<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division and A Battery, 52nd Field Artillery Battalion went by sea, using a multitude of boats and ships. The entire division would close, excluding the elements of Task Force Smith, in the port of Pusan on 5 July 1950.

c. Deployment, Air

The Task Force loaded onto C-54 cargo aircraft on 1 July at Itauzke Air Base. The two companies of 1/21st Infantry Regiment loaded everything that they would need for the upcoming fight. All the food, ammunition, weapons, radios, and extra batteries that would subsequently be used in the battle fought by Task Force Smith were on the airplanes at Itauzke Air Base. Those things not loaded on the airplanes, such as anti-tanks mines, meant that the battle would be conducted without them. The fact that this rapid deployment went as well as it did was the result of many practice alerts and training deployments that had been conducted by the 1/21st Infantry Battalion.<sup>26</sup>

After a few delays due to poor weather in South Korea, the Task Force landed on an airfield in the vicinity of Pusan. The Task Force then loaded onto trucks and was

driven to a Pusan rail station where it boarded waiting trains manned by South Korean engineers. Friendly airplanes, then strafed the trains before it disembarked in Taejon the next day, the most northern city then known to still be in friendly hands.

#### d. Mission in Country

LTC Smith found BG Church in Taejon and was told that the area north of Taejon had seen little action and that his mission was to support the ROK (Republic of Korea) forces.<sup>27</sup> BG Church said that the Task Force was to provide the ROK soldiers with confidence, and that they only needed some soldiers who would not run when they saw tanks to achieve this. LTC Smith was not given a field order, an enemy situation, a mission or a concept of support. BG Church was confident that TF Force Smith had received a mission that it was capable of doing. What facts he used to make this supposition are still unclear. BG Church did not provide LTC Smith with an explanation or analysis of why the ROK Army was being overwhelmed. LTC Smith was not warned about the T-34 tanks, or told of their numbers. Why BG Church failed to relay this information, that he possessed, is open to conjecture.

At this point the road from Seoul to Osan was known to be the main axis of advance for the NK army. BG Church knew there was a multidivisional attack using this axis, and he knew from KMAG and South Korean intelligence the number of enemy tanks. Why he thought two American rifle companies could stop this multi-division attack when four South Korean Divisions could not is a mystery, and why he didn't tell LTC Smith what he had been told is a tragedy.

Institutional racism in the army may have played a part. The head of Korean Military Assistance Group said in late June 1950 in Seoul;<sup>28</sup>

"The South Koreans have a pathological fear of tanks, that is part of the reason

for all this retreating. They could handle them if they would only use the weapons we have given them properly.”<sup>29</sup>

By contrast ninety South Korean soldiers of the 1st ROK Infantry Division had died in suicidal charges against T-34 tanks with satchel charges, hand grenades and other makeshift explosives when their American supplied anti-tank weapons failed.<sup>30</sup> KMAG officers knew this. BG Church's' opinion was;

“It will be different when the Americans get here. We'll have people we can rely on. To tell you the truth, we've been having a pretty rough time with the South Koreans. We can't put backbone into them. What are you going to do with troops who won't stay where they are put?”<sup>31</sup>

The ROK 11th, and 13th Infantry Regiments had held off two NK divisions and eighty T-34 tanks for two days suffering grievous loses of personnel, still they held their position.<sup>32</sup> Though they were outnumbered three to one in troops, eighty to zero in tanks they held and made the NK Divisions suffer grievously. Had these Regiments not been outflanked by an additional two NK Divisions they were expected to hold, they retreated in good order to Seoul where they were cut off and destroyed when panicky engineers destroyed their only escape route across the Han River.<sup>33</sup>

LTC Smith, a veteran of the Pacific war,<sup>34</sup> was not so easily swayed by such arrogant attitudes. As a result he was not as confident in the American superiority over the Asian soldiers they were facing.<sup>35</sup> LTC Smith did not share<sup>36</sup> BG Church's' belief that if some North American soldiers demonstrated some resolve then the Asian soldiers would demonstrate courage.<sup>37</sup> Accordingly, LTC Smith insisted that he needed time to conduct a reconnaissance of the terrain.<sup>38</sup> This was the first breakdown in intent of the mission. BG Church was giving orders as if a demonstration was sufficient. LTC Smith

was picking terrain to conduct a meaningful and determined defense.

e. Movement forward to Osan

On 2 July 1950, LTC Brad Smith left his soldiers in Taejon to rest while he conducted a reconnaissance with a small group of selected members of his command team. He found three pieces of terrain north of Osan that he thought defensible; he selected the northern position to defend. There were no intact South Korean units in the vicinity. LTC Brad Smith was never able to coordinate with any South Korean units or headquarters.<sup>39</sup> Once again there was a disconnect between BG Church's intent and actions taken by LTC Smith. The reality of the situation eliminated any possibility of a demonstration. This defense therefore, would not accomplish Brigadier General Church's purpose of a demonstration of resolve to the South Koreans, since none would witness it. In the end LTC Brad Smith never told his men that this was just a police action, or an arrogant display of strength, he and his men just prepared for a fight.<sup>40</sup>

f. Terrain Selected

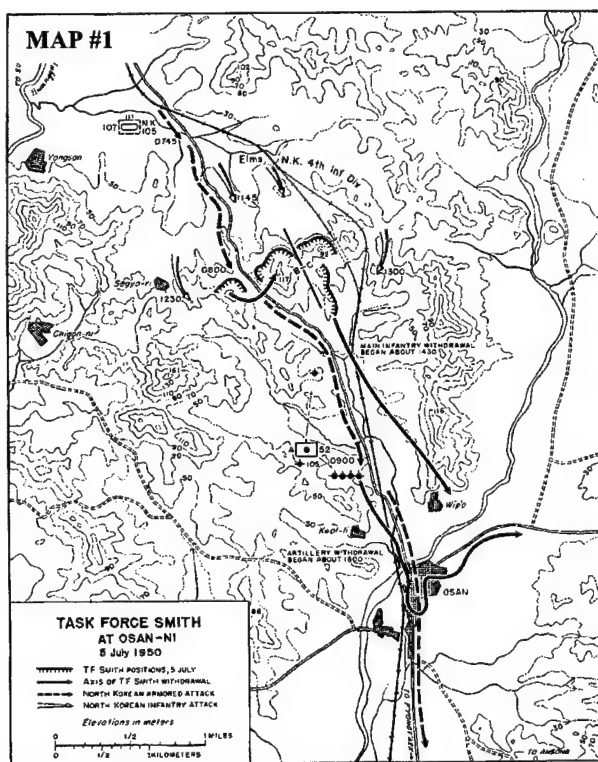
North of Osan LTC Smith found an ideal hill mass that straddled the north-south highway that lead south from Seoul through Osan to Taejon. (See Map #1) LTC Smith picked textbook defensive terrain. It commanded the northern approaches and was well positioned to delay an enemy. He could see nearly eight miles north to Suwon, the route from which the North Koreans were expected to advance. The position had hills on both sides of the major road that provided terrain to dig in fighting positions from which to ambush any enemy approach. The terrain behind the hills consisted of freshly planted rice paddies and some small, yet steep hills. These positions were used to set up the artillery and stage the trucks that brought the Task Force forward.

Brad Smith had selected good terrain. It met all the conditions that any good defensive terrain should have: great observation, good cover, and it dominated terrain for miles around as well as controlling the major approaches to Osan.

The terrain did present some problems. The main enemy approach went directly into the front of the positions, and no man-made or natural obstacles were present or could be found. The enemy had several places to dismount and encircle TF Smith. The flanks, however, presented the unsolvable problem, they were completely unsecured. This gave the enemy the option of bypassing or surrounding Task Force Smith if they chose. LTC Smith recognized this immediately. He deployed a significant portion of his force in a refused flank, which is when a line of troops is bent back upon itself to 'refuse' a flank. (See Map #1)

LTC Smith issued his five paragraph operations order to his key leaders including

Lieutenant Scott of A Battery, 52nd Artillery Battalion.<sup>41</sup> The order was interrupted but continued after aircraft strafed the group.<sup>42</sup> He gave a textbook operation order for the conduct of a defense. In his enemy situation paragraph of the operations order he did not emphasize that the threat included a large number of tanks. This was in accordance with what he had been told, but not in



accordance with what BG Church or MG Dean knew or had been told by military intelligence and the KMAC officers serving with South Korean units. He said, "Gentleman, we will hold for 24 hours, after that, we will have help."<sup>43</sup> Regrettably neither BG Church nor MG Dean had any intention of helping him. In their opinion they had given LTC Smith a simple demonstration mission. The statements made after the battle by senior leaders that Task Force Smith had been successful because it had bought time is a case of rewriting history. At no time prior to their commitment was LTC Smith ever told to delay the North Korean advance. No fall back positions had been established or withdrawal routes identified.

g. Movement forward to Taejon

On 3 July, LTC Brad Smith found BG Church and reported on the results of his reconnaissance. He was told to start his men moving from Taejon north to Osan. Once detrained south of Osan, LTC Brad Smith received further orders from BG Church through BG George B. Barth the assistant Division Commander of the 24th Infantry Division.<sup>44</sup> BG Barth told LTC Smith to proceed immediately north and occupy the terrain selected that very night. LTC Smith started moving his companies into position. Lieutenant Dwain Scott the A Battery, 52nd Field Artillery commander had a near fatal slip-up and his mission prematurely. When he attempted to link up with his battery to bring them forward, one of his edgy men inadvertently fired and missed him as he entered the unit's tactical assembly area.<sup>45</sup> This high state of tension reveals that none of these soldiers were under any illusions that they were conducting a police action; they knew they were going to war. A/52<sup>nd</sup> Battery along with 1/21<sup>st</sup> Infantry Battalion started moving forward on the rainy night of 4-5 July 1950.

At 0300 hrs on the 5th of July the main body of the Task Force arrived and began the occupation of the ground selected. At the same time, many miles to the south the remaining elements of the 24<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division had just disembarked in the port of Pusan. The NK 4th Infantry Division had on the night of 4-5 July taken Suwon. Task Force Smith and the three North Korean infantry regiments and one NK Armored Regiment were just eight miles apart and ignorant of each other. It had been the fall of Suwon that had caused BG Barth to rush Task Force Smith into position. Two rifle companies and one artillery battery were now emplaced to stop a force that had just taken one of the largest cities in Korea.

h. The enemy

The forces that were approaching Task Force Smith were well trained and ready. They had attacked across the border, through Seoul and were now heading to Pusan as fast as possible. These North Korean Soldiers found that most South Koreans were ambivalent towards either government. Democracy had only been effective in South for less than two years and had little effect on the daily lives of the average villager. The North Korean leader had taken the name of Kim IL Sung from a famous resistance fighter who fought the Japanese. Many South Korean assumed that the North Korean leader was this same anti-Japanese leader. The hatred of the Japanese ran so deep that being an anti-Japanese resistance leader was nearly instant credibility. This and other factors led to no South Korean threat to the rear areas of the North Korean Army as they moved deeper into South Korea.

The South Korean army had been trained by the United States Korean Military Assistance Command to be an army, but had not equipped them to be one. It was



incapable of putting up a mobile defense based upon its equipment and lack of effective command and control infrastructure, not a lack of leadership. It did not lack courage among the men or officers. The South Koreans fought many battles well, but because they lacked an effective command and control structure and mobility, they were uncoordinated and ultimately failed.

#### i. The Soldiers View

The soldiers of Task Force Smith that dug into the hill north of Osan were not well informed as to their situation. 1<sup>st</sup> Lieutenant Day of C Co 1/21st Infantry Battalion felt, as they left Japan, "no one believed we were going anywhere to fight."<sup>46</sup> He changed his mind when he landed amidst the turmoil in Korea "My God, I thought, maybe there is a real war going on!"<sup>47</sup> At this point no one was using the term 'police action' and after being strafed and seeing the wounded and untreated ROK soldiers 1st Lieutenant Bill Wyrick stated, "It affected me when I realized what I was going into."<sup>48</sup> The soldiers that finally set up defensive position that rainy and buggy night expected that they were up to the challenge of defending the hill. Their commander, LTC Smith, however was deeply concerned with his mission and his ability to carry it out.

The commander of Task Force Smith did not believe that a mere show of force would suffice. Amidst some grumbling, the soldiers were pushed that first night to entrench themselves into the hillside;<sup>49</sup> they laid communication wire and otherwise prepared for a standard defensive fight as they had been trained.<sup>50</sup> LT Wyrick of Task Force Smith said "At first light, the emplacements had been dug and camouflaged; their appearance was truly professional."<sup>51</sup> Task Force Smith prepared that night for a fight,

not for a police action, delay, or a demonstration.

j. The Fight

Initial contact with the enemy was made at around 0700, 5 July 1950.<sup>52</sup> Eight Soviet supplied North Korean T-34 tanks were seen advancing south from Suwon towards the Task Force Smith position. Task Force Smith conducted a defensive fight in accordance with established doctrine.<sup>53</sup> Contrary to Major General Dean's later assertion that poor camouflage contributed to the defeat, no Task Force Smith positions was fired upon until they first had fired.<sup>54</sup> The enemy tanks were brought under fire from the artillery battery assigned to Task Force Smith. Unfortunately this accurate artillery fire had no discernable effect on the tanks advance.

As the tanks of the NK 107th Tank Regiment continued to advance they came within 700 yards of the position, the 75mm recoilless guns then engaged, again with no discernable effect.<sup>55</sup> When the tanks came within small arms range the infantryman engaged the tanks and fought at point blank range with 2.36" bazookas. No tanks at this point were destroyed or damaged. As the tanks crested the front slope of the hill and began advancing on the downward slope the forward gun of the artillery engaged them again. Only this time, they fired at point blank range using some of the six rounds of anti-tank ammunition they had brought with them. This engagement destroyed two tanks while the other six continued to advance south. As more tanks continued to advance thru the position, bazookas and the 105mm howitzers continually engaged them. Two more tanks were eventually destroyed, but of the thirty-three that tried to pass, twenty-nine made it undamaged. The forward 105mm howitzer with the HEAT rounds was disabled and the T-34 tanks killed about twenty men. With no effective infantry-held anti-tank

weapons or mines, this was probably the best that could have been expected of Task Force Smith. These tanks proceeded south and destroyed the infantry's trucks the Task Force had used to drive up from Osan. Brigadier General Church had at last found the men who would not run when they saw tanks.<sup>56</sup> Unfortunately, many of these men died and their effort did little to slow the North Korean advance or stiffen South Korean resolve.

By 0900 that same morning all the NK 107th Tank Regiment had passed. Task Force Smith used the time wisely to re-supply ammunition and improve positions. At 1000hrs LTC Smith saw a long column of trucks led by three more tanks. As this column proceeded south, LTC Smith estimated that it stretched six miles long; his field of view was about eight miles. These trucks were the 4th North Korea Infantry Division fresh from victory along the border, and Seoul. It is likely that this long column did not know of the existence of the American position on the hill. They did not notice the camouflaged positions of Task Force Smith and made no attempt to dismount the trucks until fired upon - LTC Smith had surprised them. The lead North Korean tanks of the earlier battle may not have had radios or were out of range and could not have passed the information about the American position back to their follow-on forces.

At 1000 yards the mortars and the .50 cal machine guns fired upon the approaching enemy column.<sup>57</sup> At this point the battle finally turned to the American advantage. The North Koreans suffered heavy casualties from American indirect and direct fire from the infantry dug in on the hill. This fire was so effective that the North Korean commanders decided that a frontal attack was not feasible.<sup>58</sup> The North Korean soldiers and their tanks held their ground under this fire so that the remaining forces

could prepare for a flank attack.

The North Koreans advanced on both flanks of the defending Americans. Since Task Force Smith was alone, these flanks were wide open and extremely vulnerable. The North Korean skillfully took hill masses that overlooked both flanks of the position and began raining mortar, machine gun and rifle fire onto the Americans. The earlier assault from the T-34 tanks had cut the communication wire the lead from LTC Smith's command post to the artillery battery. So there was no way to employ artillery to suppress the attacking enemy firing into the American positions.

At this point in the battle, around 1430 hours, the North Koreans were still unwilling to directly assault the still strong American position. The Americans had stockpiled enough ammunition and were returning large volumes of fire, but the continual fire made the ammunition supply situation precarious. LTC Smith understood, however, that his position had become untenable and with no help available from any other unit and with the NK forces now virtually surrounding him, he wisely decided to withdraw. The failure of the 24<sup>th</sup> Division or any headquarters to provide a reserve, secure lines of operations, medical evacuation, or overall concept of operation began to have a telling effect on the tactical battle.<sup>59</sup>

#### k. Retreat/Route

Withdrawing under contact is a particularly difficult operation when a unit is part of a larger force, virtually impossible when the unit is alone and flanked by enemy positions.<sup>60</sup> Up to 1430hrs the performance of Task Force Smith had been as good as any one could expect. LTC Smith hoped to leave one company in position to cover the other while it withdrew and then repeating the process, but it didn't work. The North Koreans

had gained positions that allowed them to fire upon nearly the entire American position. When the first soldiers left their positions to cover the others, they were immediately taken under effective machine gun and mortar fire. The heavy weapons of Task Force Smith had been left behind and hence could not suppress these fires. Soldiers now completely exposed felt the full impact of the enemy fire, as casualties mounted they tried to speed to the perceived safety of the rear.<sup>61</sup> This movement was through a gauntlet; many men tried to carry wounded through and were caught in the firestorm. The movement became a route under murderous fire with men dying and being wounding adding to the turmoil.

Once the withdrawal started, the men realized they had to walk out of this fight with what they could carry. They left heavy weapons, gear and some of the wounded. It wasn't a failure of discipline. It was a failure of the division to provide any support, there were no trucks or ambulances and they were under fire. The fact remained that this single unit could not extract itself from an encircled position without support. The men soon realized that if they were wounded, they would be left behind, it was at this point that unit cohesion broke down. Men retreated and ran back in small groups. LTC Smith managed to get back and found the artillery intact. They disabled the artillery pieces because with the enemy that close, there was insufficient time to limber up the guns and bring them down the very steep hill. The artillerymen boarded the undamaged artillery trucks and managed to pick up a few infantry stragglers as they moved south.

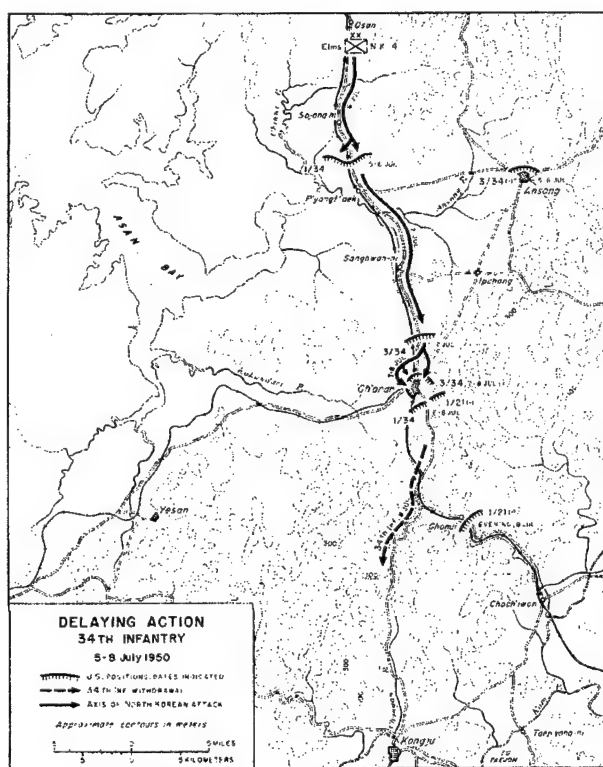
#### 1. Afterward for Task Force Smith

Task Force Smith had suffered most of its casualties in the withdrawal, not the

fight with the tanks. The final count of missing soldiers was one hundred and forty-eight soldiers and five officers, who were approximately thirty percent of the Task Force, brought to Korea. The other units of the 24th Infantry Division continued to attempt to halt the North Korean Advance. The other regiments of the division received similar missions. They were also told to hold alone, unsupported, in uncoordinated fights.

In subsequent battles, fought by the 24th Infantry Division, units were committed in an awkward and unsupported manner. (See Map #2) There were three battalions located immediately behind Task Force Smith stretching between Pongt'aek and Ansong. The commitment of these three battalions to three isolated objectives spread over eleven

miles was imprudent. There was no way to secure the flanks, route or even the front. Major General Kim Hong IL, the ROK I Corps commander and a veteran of several desperate and well-fought battles, saw these positions and was troubled. He told BG Paik the 1st ROK Division commander (soon to be the ROK Chief of Staff) "he (MG Dean) has deployed a battalion each in Pongt'aek and Ansong, but



"I'm not satisfied that will get the job done."<sup>62</sup>

General Kim was correct, these battles unfortunately differed little from the Task

Force Smith battle; they were hit hard, outnumbered, out flanked, and withdrew under pressure, without support. Again, most of the casualties were accrued in the withdrawals. The 24th Division was unsuccessful. Its regiments had been deploy piecemeal and unsupported, this presented no opportunity for a division fight.<sup>63</sup> Its units fought disorganized, command and control failed, and the Commanding General had resorted to hunting tanks himself. Major General Dean was subsequently captured and his units suffered very heavy casualties.<sup>64</sup> When the Pusan perimeter was established, the 24th Infantry Division had been rendered combat ineffective and had to be reconstituted.

### **3. History Re-Written**

Most of the initial accounts produced in the few years after the battle accurately describe the battle. Unfortunately, the unit readiness/preparation and subsequent battlefield events are generally very distorted by those who had an agenda to serve. The official United States Army account began the myth of the delaying mission assigned when it stated "the small delaying force held off the attacker for four or five hours, after which it was forced to abandon all but the men's individual weapons and fight its way back."<sup>65</sup> The North Korean rate of advance changed little because of its encounter with Task Force Smith.<sup>66</sup> Soon this series of battles fought by the 24th Infantry Division was over shadowed by the battle of the Pusan Perimeter. Later the Inchon landings and the race to the Yalu and the Chinese intervention put TF Smith in the back of many memories.

MG Dean was released from captivity in 1953 and quickly wrote his memoirs in 1954.<sup>67</sup> His view of the battle was:

"The positions Task Force Smith had reconnoitered in the vicinity of Osan

appeared to have such strength that I ordered the whole Task Force up there, to form one solid lump of Americans, which might help to stem the backward march of all these South Koreans.”<sup>68</sup>

Major General Dean had never seen these positions, and the how a solid lump of Americans would serve his purpose is unclear. His comments about the battle Task Force Smith fought were, “All in all, it was not a discouraging story. It had been the first American action, we lost it, but the enemy had paid a considerable price.”<sup>69</sup> Major General Dean regarded the loss of a battalion and half its men for a ten-minute delay for the tanks and five hours delay for two Infantry Regiments as acceptable. He said, “The enemy had paid a considerable price. I felt better - for all of a couple of hours.”<sup>70</sup> MG Dean never discussed TF Smith in detail after the above statement in his memoirs.

Major General Dean never discussed the reason for the lost battle for a very good reason; it was not his idea. He never blamed the leadership or the men of the 21st Infantry Regiment (Gimlets); nor did he blame congress for a lack of equipment nor did he ever cite a lack of training. In 1966, he said that the composition, deployment and employment of Task Force Smith had been dictated to him.<sup>71</sup> He came to recognize and was frustrated by the piecemeal employment of his division in the early phase of the Korean War.

Major General Dean was a very brave soldier and proven leader, as demonstrated by his conduct as an assistant division commander and division commander in WWII and during the Korean War, and his subsequent POW time. He led from the front in two wars.<sup>72</sup> Yet, this leadership style that served him so well before, failed to avoid the decimation of Task Force Smith and the 24th Infantry Division. This led many authors to look outside the unit for answers to explain the failure. Subsequently, many authors were



prepared to volunteer reasons for the defeat, with less than pure intentions to serve the truth.

Ten years after the war concluded, in 1963, a new agenda and a new twist on the story emerged. A Korean War history that was written by T.F. Fehrenbach titled, "This Kind of War" remains the most widely quoted history of the Korean War. Fehrenbach wrote with a very distinct view of the war; he had served in the Korean War and felt he had been let down by civilians in government and the weak willed generals who had let the United States Army get slack.

"This Kind of War", a book that is not footnoted, made several accusations that many took as true, including General Sullivan, the Army Chief of Staff, from 1988 to 1992. Fehrenbach concluded that the United States Army had become 'civilianized' and had forgotten its basic war fighting skills. His views are best expressed when he wrote;

"The young men of Task Force Smith carried Regular Army serial numbers, but they were the new breed of American regulars, who, not liking the service, had insisted, with public support, that the Army be made as much like civilian life and home as possible. Discipline had galled them, and their congressmen had seen to it that it did not become too onerous. They had grown fat."<sup>73</sup>

It was with statements like these and many other similar comments that the myth of un-preparedness solidified into the vocabulary of everyone who henceforth would discuss Task Force Smith. Subsequently many fabricated opinions have been used as facts. They include that occupation duty made the soldiers lazy; they never trained; they had no alerts; discipline was lax; and congress had left the army hollow. These statements created a case for un-preparedness, which hides the factual cause of failure: the lack of any operational plan for the deployment of American troops to the Korean Peninsula with sufficient combat power for the task that was understood to be at hand.

#### **4. The case for Un-preparedness**

##### **The Army in Japan, Duties**

The United States was the sole occupation power in Japan and thus avoided many of the issues that confronted the occupation of Germany. The lack of an ever-present enemy and the very compliant Japanese population resulted in the lack of an obvious wartime focus. On the other hand the amenable population freed the occupation forces from dreary routine of repetitive patrolling.

The perception of occupation duties has been misunderstood by many, from T.F. Fehrenbach to Gen(R) Gordon Sullivan<sup>74</sup> and even the Center for Military History. They are not alone in their misperceptions but they contributed the most to its propagation. By the end of 1945, United States soldiers no longer had any occupation duties. They no longer policed the population, and they no longer patrolled. A soldier stationed in Japan from 1946 until the Korean War had the same daily duties as one stationed in the United States. They trained on standard wartime duties, conducted marksmanship, live fires, maneuver training and hard road marching.<sup>75</sup> They had the same distractions of KP (Kitchen Police), guard duty, fire watch, prisoner escort and other miscellaneous duties that armies are good at creating.<sup>76</sup>

Even as late as 1987 when the Center for Military History published a research project on Task Force Smith, they used the unsubstantiated stories of the occupation, treating them as fact. The Center for Military History stated, "The units largely consisted of young and inexperienced soldiers, armed with police-type weapons."<sup>77</sup> In fact, one in six were combat veterans; the highest percentage of veterans the United States had ever

started a war with. The police weapons were in fact the standard issue weapons for all infantry units, heavy machine guns, recoilless rifles, 4.2 mortars, bazookas, flame throwers, these were the weapons of war that were routinely trained on. No one in Japan trained exclusively on the use of nightsticks or any other police weapon of an occupation force.

The charge that the soldiers were soft and had a focus other than war fighting is also put forward by Heller and Stofft<sup>78</sup> and T.F. Fehrenbach. They accuse the soldiers with being more interested in Japanese girlfriends than training. This observation somehow disregards the effect of American girlfriends had on troops stationed in the United States. The use of servants and 'house boys' that polished shoes is also brought up to demonstrate how the soldiers had become soft. These soldiers are not compared to the equally young soldiers that fought in Corregidor, Hue and Ia Drang in Vietnam, who also had houseboys polish their shoes, and yet did not become fat and lazy. In this case, as in many others, anecdotal evidence is applied to a predetermined view, not reality.

The varied and distracting garrison life is not by itself evidence of unpreparedness. The soldiers stationed in the Philippines had less training, more servants and had a true colonial lifestyle, but they held Corregidor and fought as well as any soldiers could. A common perception is one held by the authors of "Americas First Battles" who said,

"As had been the case in the Philippines Islands and China before the World War II, American forces stationed in Japan after the war resembled a colonial army; they were concerned with administrative duties, not poised and ready for commitment to battles."<sup>79</sup>

The conclusion that the soldiers that were stationed in Japan were soft is not based upon fact but again on anecdotal evidence. Soldiers are not soft and unprepared because

they are interested in girlfriends or have someone polish their shoes. The result of the battles involving the 24th Infantry Division and Task Force Smith in 1950 was so shocking to American military leaders that there had to be some reason for such a defeat. Instead of looking inward at the army, they focused on external pressures. Unfortunately, they picked the simplest, and least controversial cause of defeat and in doing so buried the real cause for the failure.

The occupation duties in Japan had ended in 1945. Training had become the primary focus of the units stationed in Japan. The time spent from 1946 until June 1950 was spent training as best the leadership could resource. When General Walker became the Eighth Army commander, he has been cited as the one who redirected them from occupation duties. It has been stated that he had initiated a training program that "ran into insurmountable obstacles...and that the training program ran out of time when the North Korean attacked"<sup>80</sup> Major General Dean the 24th Division commander refutes this and states that he had completed all required training up to complex combined arms battalion exercises.<sup>81</sup> Soldiers stationed in Japan in 1950 were not sitting by idly; they were training to the extent their resources allowed.

The 1/21st Infantry Battalion that would later form Task Force Smith in fact completed all their individual and collective training program tasks by March 1950, three months before the Korean War. When completed 1/21st had received the highest score in all Japan on the battalion tactical test.<sup>82</sup> The Army's evaluation program had rated the battalion tested and ready for combat. Today the term ill-prepared is used to explain this failure, when in reality the United States Army in March 1950 said it was prepared and ready.

The 21st Infantry Regiment was described as being badly equipped by General Sullivan in many interviews and by many other authors as well. The primary reason stated is the inability of the 2.36" bazooka or the 75mm recoilless rifle to penetrate the armor of the Soviet supplied T-34 tanks.

Fehrenbach places the blame squarely on congress. He states;

"The Army had designed the 3.5" Bazooka, which would penetrate the T-34. But happy to design them it hadn't thought to place them in the hands of the troops. There hadn't been enough money for long range bombers, nuclear bombs and bazookas too...if the United States had also to provide the bread and butter weapons that would permit her troops to survive in battle...If it did not want to do so, it had no moral right to send its troops into battle."<sup>83</sup>

The reality was that the 3.5" bazooka was in the process of being fielded and was issued to the rest of the division a few days later.<sup>84</sup> The fielding schedule had issued the weapons to those most likely to be threatened by tanks. Japan had a lower priority than Germany on that list. This schedule was not a congressional budget decision, but an army decision. Fehrenbach's righteous anger is as misplaced as it is uniformed.

The inability of the Task Force to stop T-34 tanks rests with the Army, not congress or the soldiers of the 21st Infantry Regiment. The army had long recognized the lack of anti-tank weapons in the Infantry Division. The decision was made not to field new anti-tank guns, but equip each Infantry Division with a medium tank battalion.<sup>85</sup> The phrase that "the best defense against the tank is another tank" is widely found in Table of Organization and Force Structure studies from 1945 to 1950.

However, the Infantry Divisions stationed in Japan had eliminated the medium tank battalions from their organization before the Korean War started. The lack of training areas and adequate bridges<sup>86</sup> to handle the medium tanks were given as the reason.<sup>87</sup> This was the only effective anti-tank system then in the Army.<sup>88</sup> The Army,

not anonymous budget cutters, decided to remove the anti-tank capability and then not to replace it.

Had the tanks been kept in the force structure, they still would not have been available due to Army decisions. Task Force Smith was flown to Korea while the rest of the division went by sea. The speed of the deployment would have made the anti-tank capability just as weak even if medium tanks had been stationed in Japan.

The lack of mines is very clearly a serious mistake. They did arrive in Korea two days later, on 7 July.<sup>89</sup> The reason they were not available was that they simple were not loaded onto the aircraft when Task Force Smith had deployed. The haste of the deployment order, load plans, combined with a possible concern for the weights of the mines, were possible reasons why they were not loaded.<sup>90</sup>

The condition of the equipment in many cases in Japan was deplorable. The condition of the artillery pieces in the 52nd Field Artillery Battalion is an example. The breechblocks of the artillery prices had been painted red because they had been condemned by ordnance. These guns were no longer allowed to fire over friendly troops.<sup>91</sup> Yet, even with these guns the crews performed Herculean feats in Osan. They positioned them on a hill so steep that they could only get one up at a time. They manhandled over a thousand rounds of 105mm high explosive up those hills. Lieutenant Dwain Scott the battery commander later said,

"The overall position was one of the most completely organized and camouflaged I had ever seen. We moved one piece into a house and replaced the house around it, one was in a cornfield and (the crew) replanted the corn before morning."

This artillery battery was not defeated because of poor equipment, fat and lazy soldiers, or lack of them, but by a plan that put them up against an infantry division with two rifle

companies in front of them. The very best equipment cannot prevent two infantry companies or even three battalions from being overwhelmed by an infantry division, if they are isolated without support.

The manning issues facing the army in Japan in 1950 were significant. The units of the 24th Infantry Division and the other three Divisions were in fact under their full authorization of strength. A wartime division should have been at 17,700 men, but in peace, the authorized strength was 14,494.<sup>92</sup> When the Korean War started the 24th Infantry Division had 11,242 men assigned, seventy-five percent of its peacetime strength and sixty percent of its wartime strength. It was the army, not congress that made the determination to maintain these low peacetime strength figures to maintain a large force structure. At peacetime strength, not every battalion in the regiment was fully manned.

The corps headquarters had been demobilized and their manpower distributed throughout Japan. This left the Eighth Army with no subordinate tactical headquarters and forced it to assume this mission. A mission that an army headquarters could not handle by temperament, training or structure. The Army had decided that it was better to maintain the structure and under man it. The assumption was that in the case of war it would be easier to fully man units than to create them. While the 24th Infantry Division was under it full organizational strength, the units that initially employed were fully manned or quickly brought up to strength by cross leveling within the unit and theater.

Task Force Smith has been used as an example of the dangerous effects of under manning a unit. The Army Chief of Staff General Joe Collins said

“The lack of these elements (the third battalion in every Regiment), in the early phases of the (Korean) war, especially the shortage of reserve battalion, resulted in the loss, not only of battles, but also of American soldiers lives.”<sup>93</sup>

Task Force Smith did not lose because of a lack of a reserve battalion; its lack of a reserve was dictated by the size of the airlift available, not manning levels. It has not been shown that the 24th Infantry Division employed any reserves even when such troops were available. Memoirs of this early phase of the war repeatedly comment about the North Korean method of setting up roadblocks to the rear of units. The doctrinal responsibility to keep these roads clear rests with the division, not with the front line battalions.<sup>94</sup>

#### **5. The case for poor Leadership**

The failure of Task Force Smith has been blamed on poor leadership.<sup>95</sup> Some have blamed the leadership for establishing a poor command climate and allowing discipline and training to atrophy.<sup>96</sup> Others claim that LTC Smith failed to hold the unit together and that resulted in the rout that followed the battle.<sup>97</sup> These are conclusions based upon anecdotes that are not supported by the facts.

Interviews with soldiers stationed in Japan from 1945 until the Korean War started all state that they were training continually.<sup>98</sup> They talk about live fires, road marches, tactical exercises and evaluated events. They talk about being led by non-commissioned officers and officers with combat experience who knew their jobs. Shoeshine boys or Japanese girlfriends did not hinder discipline. Soldiers trained, worked and took passes when the regular training cycle allowed. The units that were deployed to Korea were as disciplined as any unit sent to combat in the Second World War as measured by the statistics of AWOL, and administrative punishment administered.

When Task Force Smith was surrounded, alone on an isolated hill in Korea, under



mortar and artillery fire, taking casualties to heavy machine guns it could not engage, it remained under firm discipline. They had no communication to the rear, no artillery or mortar support, and at least 30 tanks running around their rear, yet they still retained their discipline. Under these circumstances, not one single soldier left his post; no one failed to do their duty. With useless anti-tank weapons, soldiers still followed orders to shoot and some volunteered to fire recoilless rifles and bazookas at great personal risk, at point blank range, trying to stop some of the advancing tanks. Many lost their lives in these desperate attacks on the T-34 tanks. None of these actions are the actions of an undisciplined, lazy or fat rabble that writers have used to denigrate these men.

The withdrawal did in fact, turn into a rout, and that rout was marked by panic and poor discipline. This break down in discipline resulted in the majority of the unit's casualties. Task Force Smith's two rifle companies and one artillery battery had fought three North Korean Infantry Regiments to a standstill. The fire from Task Force Smith was too effective for the North Koreans to attempt a direct assault.<sup>99</sup> LTC Smith, by then surrounded, knew the situation was futile and he needed to withdraw if he was to preserve his unit. He could see that the expected help from division was not forthcoming. Without help from any higher headquarters and no trucks to help, he knew they would have to fight their way out through the surrounding North Koreans.

The heavy weapons were left behind, not as a sign of indiscipline as many would later portray it; it was the lack of any surviving trucks to carry the heavy weapons and mortars. Unit discipline remained intact until one unfortunate event occurred. Since the unit had to fight its way out, and because it had no trucks, then some of the wounded had to be left behind. When the soldiers realized this, they understood that if they became

wounded they would be left behind also. Since no one wanted that, unit discipline began to break down as men tried to avoid abandonment. The men had fought well, surrounded for hours, but when the breakout was attempted, and the men knew that some of the wounded were being left behind, the unit began to fail. Under these circumstances, no unit can remain a perfect model of discipline.<sup>100</sup> This situation was accurately seen and warned against in doctrine of the time.<sup>101</sup> This breakdown in fact began much earlier, when the leaders above LTC Smith abandoned the discipline process for employing troops in battle.

LTC Smith was alone in his discomfort with this mission, an experienced veteran of the Second World War, he saw the problems. Both BG Church and MG Dean felt that a few Americans, or a lump of Americans, would be sufficient to buy some time for solid defense to be established. LTC Smith did not take his task so lightly, if he had, his actions of the eve of the battle would have been lackadaisical; instead, they were energetic and forceful.

LTC Smith's leadership and drive resulted in fully dug in infantry positions, accurately sighted weapons and registered artillery. These are not the actions of a leader who expected an easy fight. As best he could, he pulled back the flank position of his force so that his position looked more like a circle than a line. These are the actions of a leader guarding his flanks, not someone who planned to conduct a demonstration.

Major General Dean did not position the force or give it any specific instructions. When it was in position, he neither supervised it nor resourced it. Questions he should have been asking such as, its mission, expectations, causality evacuation, close air support, communication, security of the route or how long he needed to hold, went

unanswered. Major General Dean had employed the other elements of the 24th Division in positions far to the south of Task Force Smith. These two forces fought separate and unrelated battles. The failure of Task Force Smith began not in peacetime Japan, but in the concept of the operation and the employment.

## **6. The Case for Poor Training**

The failure of Task Force Smith has also been attributed to poor and lax training.<sup>102</sup> Fehrenbach stated that General Walker came in and tried to restore the fighting edge, the assumption being that before him the occupation force had become untrained. Fehrenbach said of Task Force Smith:

"To any troops with solid training, armed with the weapons standard to any advanced nation at the middle of the century, they (the T-34 tanks) would have been duck soup. But Task Force Smith had neither arms nor training."<sup>103</sup>

How any two infantry companies were to make 'duck soup' of a tank regiment (later designated an armored division)<sup>104</sup> and three reinforced infantry regiments is unclear. Tanks against infantry, regardless of weaponry is not 'duck soup.' Nevertheless, the false logic that they were defeated, consequently they were untrained, has been a passionate and reoccurring theme from Fehrenbach to General Sullivan.

The training program in Japan had, in fact, been completed. The units that were to composed Task Force Smith did well, although its sister unit, the 34th Infantry Regiment, failed. Both units entered combat sequentially. First the 1/21st Infantry Battalion fought and fell back after several hours. The 34th Infantry Regiment fought well at times, but Major General Dean fired and relieved a number of its commanders prior to deployment and during the fight.<sup>105</sup> Its situation was even more confused than that in which Task Force Smith was found. It was repeatedly thrown into unclear situations, units positioned with unsecured flanks and without support. It suffered the

same fate as Task Force Smith, encirclement and withdrawal under pressure.<sup>106</sup>

There are certainly a number of shortcomings in the equipment, and training of Task Force Smith and its sister units. However, none of these bears as great a responsibility of failure as inadequate operational concept under which they were deployed.

## **7. The Lesson Never Learned**

The lesson never learned is that military problems cannot be fixed by just throwing combat power against them. Military forces must be employed so that each mission or battle contributes to another or to subsequent battles or missions and/or a higher purpose. Operational art links units and functions to a higher purpose. It establishes an interrelationship between battles so that no effort is wasted in the advancement to the final objective. It does this by first examining what is important and what needs to be achieved in order to win at each stage of the operation, and what the outcome will be when all is completed. The forces sent to Korea, in July 1950, operated under no such structure or design.

It is inappropriate to use modern operational terminology to evaluate the employment of forces in July 1950. The operations doctrine of July 1950 lacked many of the terms that current readers are familiar with, yet the framework of operations is timeless.<sup>107</sup> FM 100-5, dated 1944, is full of operational ideas that are still considered valid, such as;

- (1) Concentration requires strict economy in the strength of forces assigned to secondary missions. Detachments during combat are justified only when the execution of tasks assigned them contributes directly to success in battle.<sup>108</sup>
- (2) The commander selects a physical objective,... a body of troops, dominating terrain...lines of communications or other vital area...The attainment of this

objective is the basis of his own and all subordinate plans.<sup>109</sup> (3) After... the issuance of orders, the commander places himself where he can best control the course of action.<sup>110</sup>

The employments of forces in the early stages of the Korean War were not governed by the stated doctrine of the United States Army in 1950.<sup>111</sup> Instead, personality, strategic airlift, speed, and the desire to something and the desire to be seen as having acted quickly governed the employment of these forces. The doctrine of the period that recognized the operational art, without labeling it, was ignored. Missions assigned *did not* contributed directly to success in battle, objectives *were not* the basis of his and all subordinate plans and commanders *were not* where they can best control the course of action.

Other than LTC Smith, no commander was in position to reap the rewards of success or assist in case of failure. BG Barth stayed with Task Force Smith until the tanks penetrated the position then left to warn other units.<sup>112</sup> He issued no instructions, or orders to anyone; he performed the duty of a competent young soldier, not the duty of a commander, a problem that dogged this command for months. These competent commanders when confronted with chaos, resorted to personal bravery, something they had in abundance. They resorted to leadership over command, whereas leadership leads, command exercises initiative, and preserves freedom of action.<sup>113</sup>

When the subsequent battles were fought, they mirrored Task Force Smith for the same reasons. The deployment of forces along the Pongt'aek-Ansong line was arranged so that American forces could fight as far forward as possible. The terrain selected was not a viable defensive position, it was not dominating terrain and there was no way to protect the lines of communications or other vital areas. The individual objectives

assigned did not support the higher objective nor was it the basis of all the subordinate plans. These forces were employed to meet the requirement to get into the fight; they did not support any higher or lower unit's objectives. Some of the greatest acts of bravery and cowardice were demonstrated during this part of the campaign, in part because the desperate situation demanded it. Had these units, with all their faults, been employed in a coherent defense based upon the doctrine of the time, just a few miles south, two days later, the initial battles of the Korean war would not have required the posthumous recognition of the bravery of so many men.

In this case, study the failure of any concerned headquarters to establish some operational linkages for the battles was fatal. History has shown that small forces, sometimes inadequately prepared, employed under a well designed operational context are more likely to succeed, as compared to well trained forces under an inadequate design. The short-term outnumbered militia of the American Revolutionary War under Daniel Morgan defeated the highly professional British regular forces in Cowpens.<sup>114</sup> These untrained and often panic-stricken troops were employed under an umbrella of a well-designed concept of operations. General Frido von Senger und Ettelin defended Cassino and Northern Italy with an ill-equipped and under-strength corps against the entire United States 5th Army in WWII by brilliant operational design.<sup>115</sup>

The well trained and equipped British and Australian forces failed to achieve even a marginal victory over the drafted and hastily formed Turkish forces at Gallipoli. The lack of any overarching operational design caused the initial stunning successes to be meaningless in achieving the overall objectives of the campaign.<sup>116</sup> While an overarching operational design does not ensure a victory, lack of one does ensure that

you will fight many more battles than you need too. An operational design in the early stages of the Korean War did not need to be detailed or even the product of a large staff development or decision-making process. The intuitive process of a trained mind could have developed the skeleton of a design that subsequent battles could have been fought under.

Neither General Walker nor MG Dean ever communicated in verbal or written form what needed to be done, and where it needed to be done. As a result, many pointless battles were fought that cost lives and achieved nothing. These battles were fought because two critical decisions that needed to be made, were never made. The first was what needed to be done; this would have defined the operational objective. The second was what force would be required to do this? The best terrain was not used to stop the North Koreans because it was more important to fight them than to defeat them. What needed to be done was to stop them, not to fight them wherever they were to be found. When it was decided subsequently to defend to stop the North Koreans, all the troops and equipment had been devastated and the forces no longer existed to accomplish any assigned mission.

In the communications between MacArthur and General Walker it was never communicated effectively the mission or the concept under which they should be employed. What was communicated was how fast it needed to move. From Gen Walker to BG Church the message was interpreted that all that was needed was a few troops who would not run when they saw tanks. Finally, to Major General Dean who said that what he needed was a solid lump of Americans to stop the backward march of the South Koreans.

The two most influential leaders of the initial operation were Major General Dean and General Walker. MG Dean had been a commander of the 44th Infantry Division in its drive against northwest Europe. General Walker of World War II fame was never fully in charge of the fight, as his headquarters was disorganized and un-focused.<sup>117</sup> His headquarters never issued clear instructions as to what needed to be held or when and where the remaining United States forces were to be committed.

Major Dean's headquarters was equally uninformed. His problems were different because of the general confused nature of the fight. Major General Dean sent his headquarters back and never again used it after Taejon. He began tank hunting with a bazooka saying later,

"Very few of the things I did in the next twenty-four hours could not have been done by a competent sergeant...At the time I thought it the place to be. And three and a half years later I still don't know any other place I could have been to accomplish more."<sup>118</sup>

He had left his headquarter because of "poor communications, and the need to make the hour to hour decisions"<sup>119</sup> These hour to hour decisions he was making was to push troops back into line, and observe.

He never considered why his units were being continually outflanked and what he could do about it. He never attempted to set up a series of fallback positions for his regiments. He never considered securing his line of operations or communications. He never considered massing his artillery or close air support. He never considered employing a division reserve to extract his heavily pressured units. He never considered how a truck-mounted infantry regiment with open flanks was to delay a reinforced North Korean Infantry Division.

What he did do was to drive to the front and relieve commanders that failed. He



felt the defeats could be stopped if he could only get some competent leadership to the front. He relieved the commander of 34th Infantry Regiment and replaced him with COL Martin an officer whom MG Dean had known. MG Dean said of him, "he knew very clearly what I wanted.... I breathed easier.. he could read my thoughts". A few days later, the brave COL Martin left his command post, took up a bazooka, and went into the town of Taejon to hunt tanks; a T-34 tank killed him, just two days after taking command.

COL Martin had never reconnoitered a withdrawal route, sighted his artillery, or developed a plan for withdrawal, constituted a reserve, or prepared his regiment in any way for the next operation. He and the division commander were of the same mind. MG Dean was isolated a few days later; he tried to infiltrate south but was betrayed by two civilians and made a POW for the remainder of the war. MG Dean also had never reconnoitered a withdrawal route, developed a plan for withdrawal, constituted a reserve, or prepared his division in any way for the next operation.

Both COL Martin and MG Dean were very brave and determined soldiers. They fought battles only on one level, which was on the tactical level. They understood that leadership, brave troops, more artillery, and more men won battles. If the battle was going wrong then they called for more of the same, not the reorganization of a concept. At one level they were right, in the midst of the chaos that they were in, it is unreasonable to have expected them to have the time to think about anything but the survival of their units. The thinking needed to have been done before the fighting overwhelmed them.

Under these circumstances, even the best troops would have been at a loss to stop the North Koreans. If a fully equipped, fully manned, highly trained, regiment had been emplaced in Osan or Taejon, with open flanks, what could have been expected? The

North Koreans would still outflank the force and disrupt its withdrawal. The 24th Division never understood that the answer lay in its lack of operational perspective. If both flanks could not be secured, they should have at least secured the line of operations.

It may be unfair to apply modern operational terminology and procedures to officers not educated in operational methods, but even by the oldest standards they failed to understand their role. Napoleon stated the principles of a successful campaign were:<sup>120</sup>

1. One clearly defined objective.
2. The main enemy force should the objective.
3. The army must be position in the rear or flank of the enemy.
4. Always strike the lines of communication of the enemy.

The North Koreans understood this and were very effective, but what were the 24th Infantry Division objectives, and how and where could it destroy the enemy, and how could it threaten the enemy and what would it do to disrupt the enemy's plan?

Questions that should have been asked were in what terrain could we defeat the enemy? How much force do I need there? How does that battle contribute to my overall objective? These questions were never asked, because the Army had promoted tacticians to operational commands without providing the prerequisite education.

Many writers today assault congress and the others for failing to provide to necessary equipment and money for the Army. Yet a look at what the Army decided to do with its allocated time and money between 1945 and 1950 shows that without an officer corps educated in operational warfare, the little money spent was wasted. If congress had funded faster fielding of the 3.5" Bazooka, and had built large ranges in Japan for training, and had manned all units at full strength. The Army still would have flown two rifle companies to Korea, positioned them on an isolated hill north of Osan to

be outflanked, with no support. Clearly, the defeat of Task Force Smith is the responsibility of the General that put them there. General MacArthur, BG Church and BG Barth share greatest responsibility for this.

While the battle called Task Force Smith, cannot be re-fought, we can learn the proper lessons from it. The false lessons of un-preparedness, ill-equipped, and poor leadership will likely remain part of the mystic; but they cannot be allowed to remain the enduring lesson for commanders and planners of this episode of the Korean War.

The lesson to be learned begins by asking several questions. First, why were two rifle companies sent to stop a reinforced North Korean Motorized Infantry Division? Second, if successful, why did that battle need to be fought there and then? Finally, if Task Force Smith was supposed to "not run when they saw tanks", and "be a solid lump of Americans", were they resourced to do that? Without re-fighting the battle these answer can easily be found.

In its history, the United States Army has not had a large problem with growing officers who fight can fight battles. The United States Army has had trouble-finding officers who can apply the operational art. The many gallant victories in the Korean War and Vietnam War that did not lead to victory testify to this. The victorious battle of Desert Storm that had no declared end state and a Kosovo campaign with bombs hitting what was available not was valuable continues this trend.<sup>121</sup> The Powell doctrine that requires decisive victory has the potential to lead us to another war that is fought battle by battle; an example is Operation Just Cause. In Operation Just Cause, if the initial battle had not succeeded there was no other plan.<sup>122</sup> Operation Just Cause is held up as a case study of simultaneity, yet what would have happened if simultaneity did not work? Task

Force Smith must teach the Army's leaders that battles alone, do not win wars, neither does great equipment or training. The understanding of what must happen, in what sequence and how to resource it, wins wars as Task Force Smith illustrated by what happens when you don't do that.

## **8. Conclusion**

In the case study of Task Force Smith, the truth has been hidden by a series of revisionist historians, such as Fehrenbach, with agendas to serve. There are no conspiracy theories here, and many of the historians generally believed that what they were reporting was the truth. They however have done an injustice to the men that served and their fellow soldiers who need to understand the reason's why.

Uncovering the truth is only the first step. Once the truth is clearly revealed, it must be examined to determine what can be learned. In the case of Task Force Smith and the 24th Infantry Division, the message that stands out is that soldiers cannot be employed without the intellect of the leaders being engaged beforehand. The army must learn that readiness of an army is more than equipment and manning, it is the readiness of the leadership to learn the military and operational art of the profession before the first shot is fired. Since, in the end, the arrows drawn on the maps in headquarters represent young men who will never become grandfathers, because the leaders were not ready for battle.

That is the lesson of Task Force Smith.

Appendix A (Operations Orders given by 4th NK Inf Div, 16 days before encountering Task Force Smith.

**BATTLE ORDER NO.1**

Korean People's Army  
Headquarters, the 4th Infantry Division  
Okke-ri, 1400 hours, 22 June 1950  
(Map 1:50, 000, issued 1948)

1. The enemy in front of our attack is the 1st Infantry Regiment of the enemy's 7th Infantry Division.
2. The objective of our Division, the one, utmost important on the Corps frontage of attack, is to penetrate through the enemy defenses along the Kwangdong (05.18)-Ajangdong (23.38) line, and after taking Maji-ri (03.19), Hill 536.2 (03.33) Pyongmaul (05.13), and Naehaeam, attack down to the Uijongbu-Seoul direction. The attack preparations must be completed by 23 June, 1950.
3. The 1st Infantry Division will poise to attack on our right wing, for which boundary defines along Maktaedong (23.18), Nogong-ni (18.18), Bangjingni (88.11) and Pibong (67.18). The 4th Infantry Division is not responsible for these points apart from Maktaedong. On the left, the 3rd Infantry Division will attack. The boundary between the left wing and our Division is the line running from Puhangdong (20.35) through Hill 583.5 (06.34)-Hill 535.6 (03.33)-Hill 519 (93.32) then to Hill 333.1 (82.29) for all of which the 4th Division is not responsible.
4. The main attack will be directed toward the wide road on the left flank, and the battle formation will be in two echelons.
5. The 18th Infantry Regiment, together with one artillery battalion, one 45-mm anti-tank battery, one self-propelled artillery battalion, one engineer battalion, one tank company, two anti-tank platoons attached, will break through the enemy defense line along Kwangdong (0518) and Sahang-ni (09~30); then, as the initial objective, take the Kuum-ni (14.18)-Tong-myong-chon (06.27) line and lastly, the Maji-ri (03.16)-Hill 262 (24.27) line. Subsequently, the attack will be directed toward Hyangdong (31.24).  
The foregoing actions will be executed with the support of one antitank battery attached from the anti-tank artillery battalion of the 13th Field Artillery Regiment, the 13th Infantry Division, one battery of 76-mm howitzer and 45-mm guns each; and also another 45-mm battery and the 82-mm mortar battery from the 2nd Battalion of the 5th Infantry Regiment.  
The left wing battle line of the 16th Infantry Regiment will be defined along Umnae-ri (19.30)-Saejip (12.27)-Sarang-ni (19.30)-Hill 289 (06.27)-Tangnae (00.27)-Chungpae (97.26)-Songgam-ni (94.27), and of which, with the exception of Umnae-ri, will be included in the responsibility of the 18th Infantry Regiment.
6. The 16th Infantry Regiment, acting in concert with one battery of the Division Artillery Regiment, two batteries from the self-propelled artillery battalion, two tank companies, two sections from the 45-mm anti-tank gun battalion and one engineer company, will break through the enemy defenses in the area of Sadang-ni (09.30) and Paegi-ri (10.34), and will capture Yangwon-ni (05.27) and Paeha-ri (05.33) first; Hill 362 (04.27) and Hill 535.6 (03.33) the next; and thereafter attack toward the Uijongbu direction.

The two batteries of the antitank battalion from the 13th Infantry Division; two batteries of the 76-mm howitzer regiment; two 45-mm anti-tank gun batteries; and two 76-mm howitzer batteries, one 120-mm heavy mortar battery, and two 82-mm mortar companies from the 5th Regiment will support the regimental action.

The left wing boundary will be the Division boundary, and the 16th Regimental Commander will be responsible for it.

Appendix A (Operations Orders given by 4th NK Inf Div, 16 days before encountering Task Force Smith.

7. The 5th Regiment (less one battalion), as the second echelon of the Division attack, will follow behind the 16th Infantry Regiment and will prepare to commit into battle on and around Hills 362 and 535.6 (03.33). The 1st Battalion Commander of the 5th Infantry Regiment will form an assault group with one anti-tank gun platoon, two anti-tank squads, two heavy machine gun squads, one engineer platoon in addition to one infantry platoon. The infantry platoon leader will take command of the assault group.

8. The 2nd Battalion of the 5th Infantry Regiment, with the anti-tank gun company attached, will follow the 18th Infantry Regiment, and will prepare for tank attack along the line of Maji-ri (03.16) and Tongmyonchon (06.27).

9. The field artillery units will be placed under my command. Artillery preparation fire will be laid down for 30 minutes: 15 minute-bombardment and 15 minute-quick firing.

The General missions of artillery are:

At the time of preparation for assault

- (1) To concentrate its total effort upon the forward positions of the enemy defense line.
- (2) To weigh down the enemy's artillery positions and, to ruin its earth-wooden made positions (bunkers) as well as permanent-strong points (fortified defenses).
- (3) To open up the passages through the obstacles in front of the enemy defense positions.
- (4) To interdict the enemy approach toward Chombang (06.20), Pujopdong (06.25) and Chochon-ni (06.30)
- (5) To paralyze the enemy observation posts.

When supporting the assault

- (1) The attack by infantry, tanks, and self-propelled guns will be continued as far as to Maji-ri (03.16), Machasan (02.20) and Hill 535.6(03.32)
- (2) Destroy the enemy bunkers and fortified defenses along the both sides of the main road leading to Seoul
- (3) Carry out counter-fire upon the enemy's artillery positions.
- (4) Prevent the enemy from a possible counterattack in the direction of the road leading to Kosayong (02.14), Hosa-ri (97.25) and Uijongbu.
- (5) Prevent the enemy from concentrating in the Tongduchon and Hansa-ri (97.21) area.
- (6) Destroy the enemy's command posts.

During the last phase of action

- (1) Cut off the enemy's retreat route.
- (2) Continue counter-battery fire.
- (3) Cut off the enemy's main route as well as waterways of retreat and destroy the enemy on the flanks of Tongduchon.
- (4) As soon as the initial mission of the Division is executed, it will restraint the enemy from assembling at the Taecheon (98.15), Yogong-ni (97.25) and Kichon (97.32) areas.
- (5) Prevent the enemy's concentration for counterattack from the Uijongbu area. The preparation for artillery fire must be completed by 2400 hours, 23 June 1950.

10. The missions of the Air Corps are to:

- (1) Cover the Division operations and protect troops from possible enemy attacks.
- (2) Destroy the enemy's military installation and railway marshalling yards.
- (3) Interdict the enemy movement for concentration and also check the approach of its reserves for reinforcement.

# Appendix A (Operations Orders given by 4th NK Inf Div, 16 days before encountering Task Force Smith.

(4) Destroy the enemy's roads in order to sever its troop concentration.

11. Each unit will take anti-air measures with its organic anti-aircraft weapons, and in case of enemy air attack, will mobilize 30 percent of infantry weapons.

The Division anti-air surveillance liaison post is No.... and those of each regiment are:

18th Inf Regt No....

16th Inf Regt No....

5th Inf Regt No....

The anti-aircraft machine gun company will protect the Division Command Post and the field artillery positions.

12. The anti-tank reserve unit, composed of one company from the 45-mm battalion and one engineer company, will follow the second echelon in attack and thereafter will repel any enemy attempts to penetrate through in column with its mechanized force.

13. The Division Medical Station and the Evacuation Station have been locating at 23.30 and 23.31 as shown on the map, effective 20 June 1950 respectively.

14. The Division Command Post and the Observation Post will be opened at Hyopkok (13.281) and 03.11, respectively, effective 23 June 1950, and the removal axis of the Command Post will be fixed to a direction along the roads leading to Uijongbu.

15. Reports will be made:

(1) When the attack preparations are completed.

(2) When attack is begun.

(3) By messenger, radio, and written report when the first day, the next, and then daily mission had been completed.

(4) Once every two hours on the matters other than the foregoing.

(5) Written report will be submitted twice a day to be reached exactly at 1700 and 1900 hours.

16. Standard Signal Codes:

| No. | Code                     | Flare       | Telephone   | Radio |
|-----|--------------------------|-------------|-------------|-------|
| 1   | Commence Attack          |             | Storm       | 244   |
| 2   | Commence Artillery Fire  | Red         | Storm       | 333   |
| 3   | Begin Supporting Assault | Green Snow  | Storm       | 111   |
| 4   | Cease Firing             | White       | Stop Firing | 222   |
| 5   | Begin Assault            | Green       | Hot Sky     | 224   |
| 6   | Call for Fire Support    | Red & Green | Thunder     | 444   |

17. First Deputy: Chief of Staff

Second Deputy: Commander,

16th Infantry Regiment.

(Prepared 9 copies)

Lee Kun-mu

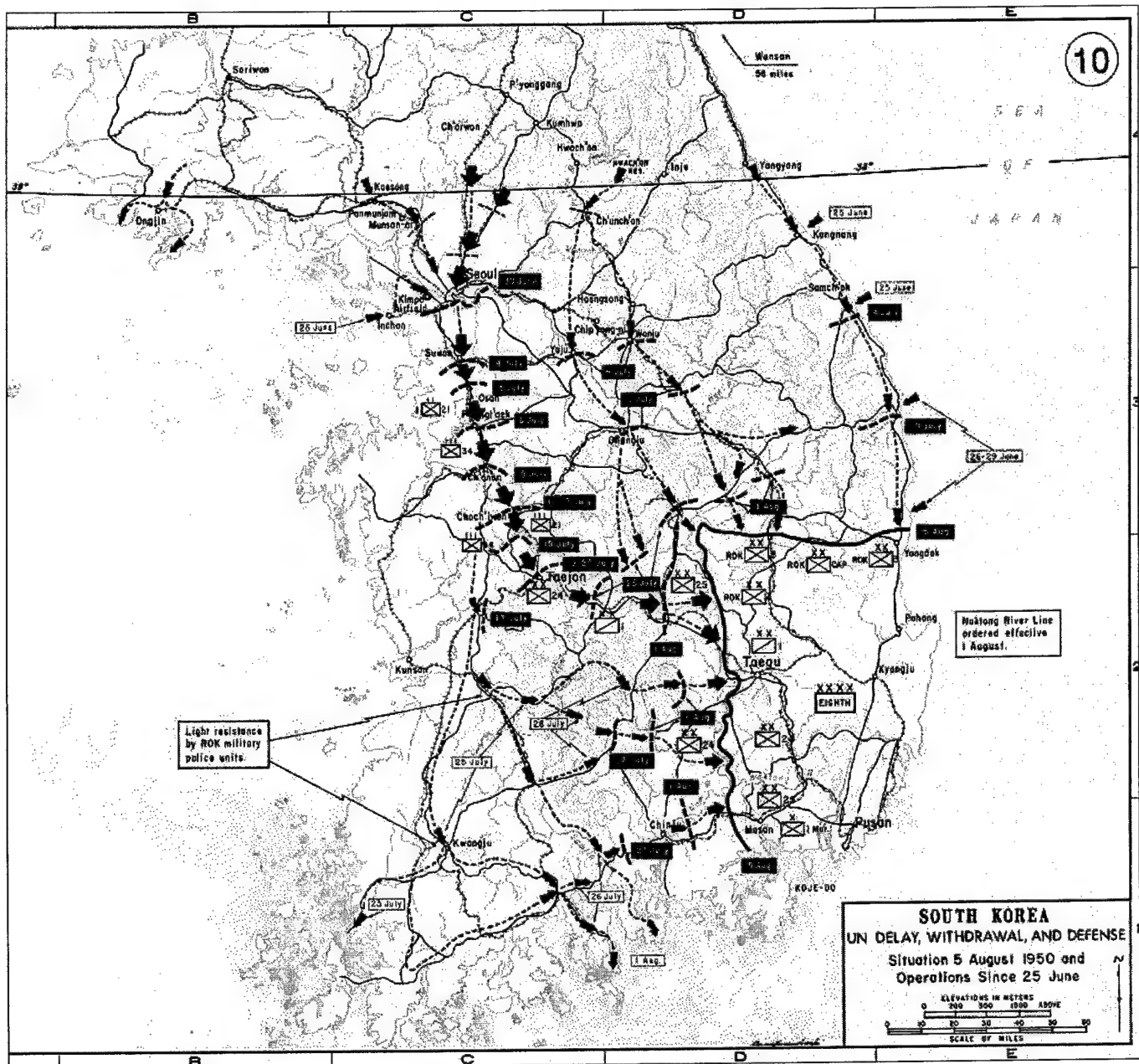
Commander

4th Infantry Division

Ho Bong-hak

Chief of Staff

Appendix B (UN Delay, Withdrawal, and Defense, 25 June – 5 Aug 1950).





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## End Notes

<sup>1</sup> Sullivan, GEN Gordon, "No More Task Force Smiths," *ARMY Magazine*, (January 1992), pg. 18

<sup>2</sup> Heller, Charles E. and Stofft, William A. *America's First Battles*, University of Kansas Press, Lawrence Kansas, 1986, pg. 270

<sup>3</sup> Dean, Major General William F. *General Dean's Story*, The Viking Press, New York 1954.

<sup>4</sup> Collins, J Lawton, *War in Peacetime, The history and lessons of Korea*, Houghton Mifflin Company, Boston, 1969, pg. 42-43.

General Roberts did not report to General MacArthur or anyone within the Army. General MacArthur was not consulted or asked his opinion of these reports, and there is evidence that he never heard most of the reports of North Korea and South Korean force imbalance. In the end it probably would have meant little since these reports were inaccurate and based upon no discernable source of intelligence other than subjective opinion. General Roberts retired 10 days before the invasion; his opinion of the inaccuracies in his reports is understandably not reported.

<sup>5</sup> Appendix A is the OPORD issued by the North Korean Commander of the 4th NkPA Infantry Division.

This division was the force that hit Task Force Smith 5 July 1950. This order demonstrates a very high level of understanding of how the division can and would fight.

<sup>6</sup> Collins., pg 20

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., pg 23

<sup>8</sup> James, D.C. (1985). *The Years of MacArthur, Volume III 1945-1964*. Boston, Houghton Mifflin Company, pg. 434.

<sup>9</sup> Blair, C. (1989). *The Forgotten War*. New York, Doubleday, pg 87

OPLAN SL-17 was written by Colonel Donald McB. It was one of many that had been written for the defense of the Korean Peninsula before the war. It was stored in the Pentagon. When the North Koreans invaded, GHQ MacArthur requested fifty copies. All of MacArthur's ideas parallel this document.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., pg 81

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., pg 82

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., pg 82

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., pg 82

<sup>14</sup> Collins, J Lawton, *War in Peacetime, The history and lessons of Korea*, Houghton Mifflin Company, Boston, 1969, pg 21-23 discusses this teletype message and MacArthur silence and General Collins 'understanding' of what the silence meant.

<sup>15</sup> Blair, C. (1989). *The Forgotten War*. New York, Doubleday, pg 81-82

Blair states that the plan was ill conceived and poorly executed by men who knew better, but were intent on allowing MacArthur make the call.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., pg 92

<sup>17</sup> The great irony or tragedy is that the 34th Infantry Regiment deployed by sea and arrived at the same

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time in Pusan. It was amongst this contingent that A Battery, 52nd Field Artillery Battalion under LT Dwain Scot arrived. He departed immediately north a linked up with LTC Smith and fought with Task Force Smith. The forces airlifted and those that went by sea arrive at the same place and the same time.

<sup>18</sup> Because of weather delays

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., pg 96

<sup>20</sup> Blair., pg 82

<sup>21</sup> Figured from a peacetime organization of an Infantry Regiment. T/O&E 7 Dec 1946 which was still in use in 1950.

<sup>22</sup> Blair., pg 81-83, All the commanders from MacArthur on down the MG Dean had a 'make it happen' attitude. They were going to deploy troops by air, no matter what, regardless if it made sense or not.

<sup>23</sup> Blair., pg 97

<sup>24</sup> LTC Dwain Scott (A Battery Commander in the 52<sup>nd</sup> Artillery Battalion) made the point clear to the author. LTC Scott a WWII veteran stated that following orders was considered an inviolable rule in 1950. He made the point that when ordered, soldiers engaged tanks with ineffective 2.36" Bazookas without discussion or comments when their lives were clearly in imminent danger. Yet, the same adherence to discipline has many different qualities. When very experienced Generals see a superior commit a mistake, they clearly have the responsibility to say that they believe a mistake is being made. That is moral courage. If the General still says to do it, then the issue is settled, but at least the General has had the opportunity to hear other options. Gen MacArthur had no problems hearing critics before Inchon; his historic treatment of critics and many successes may have lead to the unwillingness of subordinates to question him. Blair in his book, *Forgotten War* believes this is the reason Gen Walker played such a quiet role in this phase of the war.

<sup>25</sup> Stofft., pg 279

<sup>26</sup> Interview with LTC Scott then the Battery Commander of A Btry 52nd FAB. Practice no-notice alerts and movements were common. This training allowed the units to arrive in Korea intact and functional in spite of the hasty departure.

<sup>27</sup> Stofft., pg 277

<sup>28</sup> KMAG; Korean Military Assistance Group

<sup>29</sup> Higgins, M (1951). *War in Korea, The Report of a Women Combat Correspondent*. New York, Doubleday & Company, Inc. pg. 21

<sup>30</sup> Paik, Gen. Sun Yip. (1992). *From Pusan to Panmunjom*. Virginia, Brassey, pg 8  
Twenty Nine Year old General Paik commanded the 1st ROK Division. He personally witnessed these charges.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.,48

<sup>32</sup> Blair, C. (1989). *The Forgotten War*. New York, Doubleday, pg 60-61  
The memoirs of Gen Paik the 1st ROK Division commander, also confirm this.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., pg 75

<sup>34</sup> LTC Smith was stationed at Pearl Harbor on Dec 7, 1941. This was his second opportunity to see the

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first shot fired in a war.

<sup>35</sup> Goulden, Joseph C. *Korea, The Untold Story of the War*, McGraw-Hill Book Company, New York, 1982, pg.113.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., pg.113.

BG Church had been in Korea for some time, he had witnessed the battles near Suwon and had seen the ROK forces defeated by massed enemy infantry attacks supported by tanks. Why he concluded that two American Rifle Companies were sufficient to stop such a force is unknown. His recorded comments were that "he would trade the entire Korean Army for 100 New York policemen". He may not have even been aware of the racism that the comment hinted at. Nonetheless, his poor analysis of the situation cost the lives of many soldiers.

<sup>37</sup> At this time the ROK soldiers had destroyed numerous T-34 tanks, most by suicide charges with grenades and mines.

<sup>38</sup> Collins, pg 46.

<sup>39</sup> LTC Yoon was attached with LT Scott the A Battery commander, whether he came with the unit from Japan or linked up with the unit in Korea remains unclear.

<sup>40</sup> The men had been strafed and could see the streaming refugees, no one in Task Force Smith used the term Police Action, they were preparing for war.

<sup>41</sup> LT Scott, now LTC Dwain Scott was present and related the basics of the OPORD in an interview conducted at his home, 29 March 2000.

<sup>42</sup> Though unproven it is widely thought that these aircraft, originally thought to be North Korean Yaks, were in fact Australian P-51 Mustangs.

<sup>43</sup> Barnett, Major D. L. (1999). "Breach Blocks Painted Bright Red, Task Force Smith in Korea" *Field Artillery*, July-August 1999, pp. 30-36

<sup>44</sup> BG Barth was the CG of the 25th Division Artillery replacing BG Meyer who was rushing back from leave.

<sup>45</sup> LT Scott Interview, March 2000

<sup>46</sup> Knox, Donald, *The Korean War, Pusan to Chosin, An Oral History*, Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, San Diego, 1985, pg 17.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., pg 16

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., pg 18

<sup>49</sup> Ibid., pg 19

<sup>50</sup> Ibid., pg 18-20

<sup>51</sup> COL Wyrick, unpublished draft of a chapter of an untitled work concerning Task Force Smith.

<sup>52</sup> The time is in dispute among many official and unofficial sources. LTC Smith said the time was 0700 hrs when he first spotted the enemy column, 0745 when it neared his position and was fired upon.

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<sup>53</sup> Positions were dug in and platoons laid wire to headquarters and their mortars. Fields of fire were checked and ammunition distributed. Artillery was registered and prepared. This was a hasty defense occupied entirely at night and was found prepared and ready at first light.

<sup>54</sup> Dean, Major General William F. *General Dean's Story*, The Viking Press, New York 1954.

The hill lacked trees and other scrub brush, yet no North Korean action can be attributed to failure to camouflage, no NK tanks ever fired upon the troops until they fired first, and the NK truck mounted infantry never dismounted until fired upon.

<sup>55</sup> Knox., pg 20.

LT Day fired and had numerous hits with his platoons 75mm recoilless rifle, but aside from a mobility kill, no tanks were believed stopped by this weapon.

<sup>56</sup> The trucks used by the artillery remained untouched and they were the trucks used in the final evacuation.

<sup>57</sup> Conn, S. (Ed.). (1961). *U.S. Army in the Korean War: South to the Nakdong, North to the Yalu*. Washington D. C.: U.S. Government Printing Office.,pg 73

<sup>58</sup> Ibid., pg 73

<sup>59</sup> Collins., pg 47-52. Gen Collins makes the point that if this force had a reserve and some way to secure it flanks and rear then it would have at least had what it was supposed to have, but even that would be inadequate.

<sup>60</sup> Heller, Charles E. and Stofft, pg 281.

<sup>61</sup> Knox., pg 23, 1LT Phillip Day, Jr, C Co 1/21st Inf Bn

<sup>62</sup> Paik, Gen. Sun Yip. (19920. *From Pusan to Panmunjom*. Virginia, Brassey., pg 25

<sup>63</sup> Recording Question and Answer session to a 23 May 1966 leadership seminar sponsored by CGSC, conducted in Bell hall. MG Dean said that he could not comment on the comparison of division command between Korea and WWII since he had never fought as division Korea.

<sup>64</sup> Gen Dean was the Commanding General of the 24th Infantry Division, while tank hunting himself he was separated and tried to walk back to UN lines. He was betrayed by two South Korean Civilians a few weeks later and spent the rest of the war in a private POW camp. The two civilians who betrayed him were found after the war, one was executed and one was given a life sentence, they claim that they were trying to help him escape but turned him over when escape appeared hopeless. Gen Dean asked for leniency, but the sentence were carried out regardless.

<sup>65</sup> Department of Military Art and Engineering, U.S. Military Academy, *Operations in Korea*, West Point, 1952, pg. 9

<sup>66</sup> Shrader, C. R. (1995). *Communist Logistics in the Korean War*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press. The rate of advance up to 5 July was 6.5 miles per day, up to 10 July it was 4.3 mile per day, and up to 1 Aug, the Pusan Perimeter it was 3.5 miles per day. The slow down was a result of North Korean Logistic shortfalls more than American delays.

<sup>67</sup> Dean., pg. 22

<sup>68</sup> Ibid., pg. 23

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<sup>69</sup> Ibid., pg .23

<sup>70</sup> Dean., pg .23

<sup>71</sup> Recording Question and Answer session to a 23 May 1966 leadership seminar sponsored by CGSC, conducted in Bell hall, Fort Leavenworth Kansas.

<sup>72</sup> Interview conducted 23 May 1966, answer to a question poised by a CGSC student who had served under BG Dean in WWII, recorded and stored in the CALL Archives.

<sup>73</sup> Fehrenbach, T.R. *This Kind of War*, Bantam Books, 1963,1991, pg 91-92

<sup>74</sup> T.F. Fehrenbach wrote *This Kind of War* in 1963 and in 1989 General Gordon Sullivan was interviewed for "No More Task Force Smiths" in *Army Magazine* in 1992.

Both state that Task Force Smith was defeated because it was "ill-prepared and badly equipped force"

<sup>75</sup> Notes from interview with Charles Garrett, D Troop, 1/5 Cav, 1st Cavalry Division.

<sup>76</sup> Interview, Charles John Garrett, a soldier from D Troop 1/5 Regt 1st Cavalry. (My Dad)

<sup>77</sup> Gough, T. J. (1987). *U.S. Army Mobilization and Logistics in the Korean War*, A Research Approach. Washington D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office. pg 25

<sup>78</sup> Heller, Charles E. and Stofft, William A. *America's First Battles*, University of Kansas Press, Lawrence Kansas, 1986

<sup>79</sup> Ibid., pg. 270

<sup>80</sup> Heller pg. 270

<sup>81</sup> Dean, Ibid., pg

<sup>82</sup> Interview with LTC Bill Wyrick, unit historian of the 21st Infantry and a Platoon Leader in Task Force Smith. dated 21 March 2000.

<sup>83</sup> Fehrenbach., pg 96-97

<sup>84</sup> 10 July 1950 at Taejon

<sup>85</sup> Summary of Equipment for Infantry Division T/O&E 7 (Peace), December, 1946, Encl #5

<sup>86</sup> Historian have failed to notice that if tanks were inadequate for Japanese built bridges then they should have been inadequate for Japanese bridges, most of which had been built by Japanese, to Japanese specifications.

<sup>87</sup> Collins, J. L. (1969). *War in Peacetime, The History and Lessons of Korea*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company

<sup>88</sup> All the tank destroyer units had been disbanded; the entire 57mm and 90mm anti-tank gun inventory had been withdrawn from service. A full strength Infantry Division had four anti-tank weapon systems, the bazooka (2.36 or 3.5 inch), 75mm recoilless rifle, mines and medium tanks.

<sup>89</sup> Stofft., pg.286

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<sup>90</sup> The exact reason is not known, but the most likely is the failure to believe that a tank threat existed, the intelligence provided by the South Koreans was very accurate, but it was not believed, and more importantly, it was not passed down to those loading the airplanes and ships.

<sup>91</sup> Barnett, Major D. L. (1999). "Breech Blocks Painted Bright Red, Task Force Smith in Korea." *Field Artillery*, Interview with LTC Dwain Scott, Field Artillery, July-August 1999, pp. 30-36

After all these years, the technical reasons for the guns, being condemned are unclear. However, based upon current ordnance policy, it is necessary to have the gun and their breeches checked once a year. They are checked for wear, distortions, stress fractures, etc. In addition, a record of rounds fired through the guns is kept. If the guns had failed one of the tests, or the barrel or breech had exceeded the specific acceptable round count, the guns would have been condemned. There would have been no danger of the guns exploding, only a loose of accuracy and range. The loss of range would have been sufficient reason to prohibit firing over friendly troops.

<sup>92</sup> T/O&E 7, December 1946

<sup>93</sup> Collins, pg. 67

<sup>94</sup> FM 100-5, *Operations*, June 1944

<sup>95</sup> Fehrenbach and Heeler and Stofft are the primary apostles of this theory

<sup>96</sup> Fehrenbach, T.F. (1963). *This Kind of War*. New York, Bantam Books.

<sup>97</sup> Heller, C. E. & W. A. Stofft. (1986). *America's First Battles, 1776-1965*. Lawrence, KS: University of Kansas Press.

<sup>98</sup> Interview PFC Charles J Garrett, station with the D troop 1/5th Regt 1st Cav from 1946-1948, LT Dwain Scott stationed with A Battery 52nd Artillery Bn, 24th ID are among those from a series of interviews across the range of dates and unit and ranks that refute the colonial, non-training atmosphere.

<sup>99</sup> Conn, S. (Ed.). (1961). *U.S. Army in the Korean War: South to the Naktong, North to the Yalu*. Washington D. C.: U.S. Government Printing Office. pg. 72-73

<sup>100</sup> Sajer, Guy, *Forgotten Soldiers*.

<sup>101</sup> FM 100-5 (1944) pg 195, para 686 states "A daylight withdrawal usually involves such heavy losses and so great a degree of disorganization that it is preferable for large units to hold out at all costs until nightfall and effect the withdrawal under the cover of darkness. As a rule, only rearward echelons can be withdrawn successfully by day. Small mobile forces may execute daylight withdrawals.

<sup>102</sup> Fehrenbach and Heller

<sup>103</sup> Fehrenbach., pg. 97

<sup>104</sup> The 105th Tank Regiment was so large that by the middle of July it was designated the 105th Tank Division. At full strength, a North Korean tank company had 13 tanks, a Battalion 31. At least 40 passed through Task Force in a few hours. Task Force Smith, fighting three full regiments, something a division would have found difficult to do.

<sup>105</sup> Stofft., pg 285, 290

<sup>106</sup> Stofft., pg 290-296

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<sup>107</sup> U.S. Department of the Army. FM 100-5 *Operations*. Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 14 June 1993

Department of the Army, FM 101-5, *Staff Officers Field Manual, Staff Organization and Procedures*. Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office: July 1950

<sup>108</sup> FM 100-5.(1944) *Operations*, pg 33

<sup>109</sup> Ibid., pg. 108

<sup>110</sup> Ibid., pg. 38

<sup>111</sup> FM 100-5 (1944) was the current date of the Operations manual. It was not updated until 1953. The 1953 Operations Manual differed very little from the 1944 version other than the inclusions of many WWII operations orders and vignettes.

<sup>112</sup> This is in no way insinuates the BG Barth was not a brave soldier. He did what he felt he needed to do, which was to warn others of the threat. The fault lay in that he gave LTC Smith no further instructions, and the fate of the division all forces in Korea then rested on the shoulder of a Lieutenant Colonel with no radio.

<sup>113</sup> FM 100-5., pg 32

<sup>114</sup> Wood, William J. *Leaders and Battles*, Presidio Press, 1984, pg. 8-33

<sup>115</sup> Senger, General von, *Neither Fear Nor Hope The Wartime Memoirs of the German Defender of Cassino*. E.P. Dutton & Co., Inc, 1964

<sup>116</sup> Cohen, Elliot A. and Gooch, John, *Military Misfortunes, The Anatomy of Failure in War*, Macmillan, Inc 1990. pgs., 95-132

<sup>117</sup> Hastings, Max, *The Korean War*, Simon & Schuster, New York, 1987, pg. 120

<sup>118</sup> Dean., pg 29.

<sup>119</sup> Ibid., pg 28

<sup>120</sup> Schneider, James L. *Theoretical Paper No. 3*, School of Advanced Military Studies, pg. 8

<sup>121</sup> While many may believes these are examples of good operational plans the author does not share that view.

<sup>122</sup> Donnelly, T. *Operation Just Cause*, Lexington Books, New York pg. 400

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